

Elite Opponents

Assassin Golems

Creature Incarnations
By Robert Wiese



Welcome to *Elite Opponents: Creature Incarnations*, a column all about monsters -- and strange, variant monsters at that! The **D&DFight Club** column presents one monster at three different power levels, so that you can insert the appropriate version into your campaign. This column, on the other hand, examines different versions of a given creature for use in different types of campaigns. Though most versions fit best into **D&D** campaigns, one version in this installment is for the **d20 Modern** game, so you can use the creature in your modern-day or future campaigns too.

Design Notes

Basic golems already have statistics in the rulebooks, and even a specifically programmed golem is still just a golem. But in this installment, we examine the concept of "assassin golems" -- constructs that can be programmed in interesting ways and instructed to kill specific individuals or groups. The title of the column is a little misleading, since no true golems are discussed here, nor are we taking a single base creature and making variants of it, as we did in the last installment with the tarrasque. This time, we're making variations on a concept -- not just a creature.

Variant Golems

If you've made any constructs in your own campaigns, you've probably realized that very few templates can apply to a creature of that type. Since they're not alive, constructs rank at the top of the type pyramid with undead and outsiders. Thus, to make a construct more challenging, you generally have to make a tougher version of the one in the book. However, a couple of templates can be used either to make another creature into a construct, or make a construct into a different creature -- and those are the options we're going to explore here. In your own game, you're free to break the rules and apply the templates in any way you choose, so if you want to apply the tauric or the spellwarped template to a stone golem, go ahead. You might come up with a really interesting monster.

d20 Modern: Half-Clay Golem/Half-Yuan-Ti Halfblood

The yuan-ti have had centuries to adapt to the modern world, and most have done so. But every so often, a throwback to the ancient race hatches in an otherwise-normal clutch. Though such creatures are as smart as their more evolved cousins, they are treated as slaves and used to further the nefarious ends of the yuan-ti. Some yuan-ti like to experiment on these throwbacks, either to recover some lost trait and breed it back into the race, or to turn the subject into an even more ferocious killer.

For more on the yuan-ti, consult our recent Design & Development article: [Monsters with Traction, part 2](#).

Since the yuan-ti described here has the head of a snake, he cannot disguise himself as a human. Therefore, he was deemed a good candidate for experimentation. His tormentors amputated his snake tail and attached artificial clay arms and legs, eventually turning him into a half-golem. During the process, he was taught to hate a particular race or group of people (whichever works best for your campaign), and parts of these creatures were fused into his clay limbs. This yuan-ti still has most of his memories, and he relentlessly hunts the creatures he was taught to hate, as instructed by his "betters" among the yuan-ti.

This yuan-ti is based on the pureblood described in the *d20 Modern Core Rulebook*, with most of the characteristics of the *Monster Manual* halfblood. Then class levels were added, and finally the half-golem template from *Monster Manual II* was applied.

Half-Clay Golem/Half-Yuan-Ti Halfblood CR 12

Dedicated Hero 2/Shadow Hunter 3

Medium Construct

Allegiances chaos, evil

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +12; darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, English (or other local language), Yuan-ti

Defense 22 (+1 Dex, +7 natural, +2 dedicated hero, +2 Shadow Hunter), touch 14, flat-footed 21

hp 56 (12 HD); DR 10/silver

Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, death effects, death from massive damage, disease, fatigue, energy drain, exhaustion, magic, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, piercing and slashing weapons, poison, sleep effects, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless)

Resist SR 16

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +12

Speed 40 ft. (6 squares); cannot run

Melee longsword +19 (1d8+13/19-20) or

Melee unarmed +21 (1d6+9 nonlethal) or

Melee longsword +19/+14 (1d8+13/19-20) and

Melee bite +14 (1d6+4 plus poison) or

Melee unarmed +21/+16 (1d6+9 nonlethal) or

Ranged MAC Ingram M10 (.45 machine pistol) +11 (2d6) or

Ranged M16A2 assault rifle +11 (2d8) or

Ranged MAC Ingram M10 (.45 machine pistol) +11/+6 (2d6) or

Ranged M16A2 assault rifle +11/+6 (2d8)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +10; **Grap** +19

Atk Options berserk, haste, poison, *produce acid*, target bonus +1, wound

AP 11

Abilities Str 28, Dex 13, Con --, Int 14, Wis 18, Cha 8

SQ *alternate form*, *aversion*, chameleon power, construct traits, *detect poison*, swift track, target bonus

Feats Advanced Firearms ProficiencyB, Archaic Weapons ProficiencyB, Blind-Fight, BrawlB, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Brawl, Improved Initiative, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Power Attack, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Emphasis (Survival)B, Track

Skills Concentration +9, Hide +10, Investigate +12, Knowledge (arcane lore) +9, Knowledge (behavioral sciences) +8, Knowledge (earth and life sciences) +7, Knowledge (streetwise) +7, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +12, Survival +19

Talents insightful talent tree (Skill Emphasis [Survival])

Rep +1

Possessions M16A2 assault rifle, 60 bullets, MAC Ingram M10 machine pistol, 60 bullets, longsword, casual clothing, trenchcoat, large hat with a wide brim that can hide the wearer's head (at least a little)

Hook "With my clay limbs and serpentine superiority, I will slay you."

Alternate Form (Sp): The half-golem yuan-ti can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to the *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but he does not regain any hit points for changing forms, and he can assume only viper forms.

Aversion (Sp): As a standard action, the half-golem yuan-ti can plant a strong aversion to snakes and yuan-ti in the mind of a single creature (Will save DC 12 negates). An affected creature must take its next action to move at least 20 feet away from any snake or yuan-ti visible. The aversion lasts 10 minutes and can be overcome by succeeding on another Will save. If the averted subject succeeds on the second Will save, or cannot get at least 20 feet away from any snake or yuan-ti, it takes a -4 penalty to Dexterity as long as the aversion persists and it remains within 20 feet of a snake or yuan-ti. The half-golem yuan-ti can use this mind-affecting ability at will.

Berserk (Ex): If the half-golem yuan-ti takes damage in combat, he flies into a berserk rage, attacking wildly until either he or his opponent is dead. He gains a +4 bonus to Strength and Constitution and takes a -2 penalty to Defense. The half-golem cannot voluntarily end his rage.

Detect Poison (Sp): As a standard action, the half-golem yuan-ti can detect whether an object, a person, or an area has been poisoned or is poisonous as a psionic ability. He determines the exact kind of poison with a successful DC 20 Wisdom check.

Haste (Su): Once per day after he has engaged in at least 1 round of combat, the half-golem yuan-ti can use *haste* on himself as a free action. The effect lasts 3 rounds and is otherwise the same as the spell.

Immunity to Piercing and Slashing Weapons (Ex): The half-golem yuan-ti takes no damage from piercing or slashing weapons, whether they are magical or not, and no matter what material they are made of.

Magic Immunity (Ex): The half-golem yuan-ti is immune to all spells, psionic powers, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects. Any magical attack that deals acid damage heals 1 point for every 3 points of damage the effect would have caused. The half-golem yuan-ti gets no saving throw against acid attacks.

Poison (Ex): Injury Fortitude DC 16; initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Produce Acid (Sp): The half-golem yuan-ti has the power to exude acid from his body psionically as a free action, dealing 1d6 points of damage to the next creature he touches, including a creature hit by his bite attack. The acid becomes inert when it leaves the half-golem yuan-ti's body.

Target Bonus: The half-golem yuan-ti may spend an action point and a full-round action to designate a target. He does not need to know the target personally, but he must be able to describe the target uniquely. He cannot select a target during combat, and after selecting a target, he must wait 24 hours before selecting another. He gains the target bonus (+1 in this case) as a competence bonus on attack rolls against the target, as well as when he is using the following skills on the target or in tracking the target: Bluff, Computer Use, Gather Information, Investigate, Listen, Research, Search, Sense Motive, and Spot.

Wound (Ex): The damage that the half-golem yuan-ti deals doesn't heal naturally and resists healing spells. A

character attempting to cast a conjuration (healing) spell on a creature damaged by the half-golem yuan-ti must succeed on a DC 26 caster level check, or the spell has no effect on the injured character.

Clockwork Giant

When gnomes want to kill their bigfolk enemies, they create horrid constructs such as this one. The effigy winged ettin is designed to kill creatures that move about in the open, such as hill giants or humans who compete for gem mines. The creature is armed with a lot of javelins so that it can make use of its aerial attack capability. Its primary downside is the loss of its superior two-weapon fighting ability, making it no better than any other clockwork giant in combat. Furthermore, it cannot learn any skills or feats, so it cannot be made much better than it is.

Despite these limitations, and the fact that effigy winged ettins are weaker than standard golems, gnomes seem to prefer them. Doubtless some gnomes are working on solving the problems with these constructs even now.

You might consider the following variant: The gnomes managed to secure additional funding for *Project: Effigy Ettin*, and managed to construct separate clockwork brains inside each of the ettin's two heads. As a result, the ettin retains its Superior Two-Weapon Fighting (normally lost when acquiring the Effigy template, pg. 151 of the *Complete Arcane*), and so would not take the normal penalty on attack or damage rolls for attacking with two weapons.

Effigy winged ettins look a lot like real ettins when their wings are folded. A successful DC 20 Spot check is required to tell the difference. The ones created by gnomes look particularly mean, but they are probably deliberately designed that way to scare opponents.

Effigy Winged Ettin CR 9

N Large Construct

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2; darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision

Languages Understands gnome

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18

hp 85 (10 HD + 30 hp); DR 5/adamantine

Immune ability damage, ability drain, critical hits, death effects, death from massive damage, disease, fatigue, energy drain, exhaustion, magic, mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), necromancy effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, piercing and slashing weapons, poison, sleep effects, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless)

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee morningstar +14 (2d6+8) or

Melee slam +14 (1d6+8) or

Ranged javelin +9 (1d8+8) or

Melee mwk morningstar +9/+4 (2d6+8) and

Melee mwk morningstar +5 (2d6+4) or



Melee 2 slams +14 (1d6+8) or

Ranged 2 javelins +4/-1 (1d8+8)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +19

Abilities Str 27, Dex 16, Con --, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 1

SQ Cannot heal damage on its own, cannot be raised, immediately destroyed when reduced to 0 hit points or less

Feats Power AttackB

Possessions 2 masterwork morningstars, *quiver of Ehlonna*, 10 masterwork javelins, 8 javelins

Hook "Uuuuhhhhhhhhhh, die."

Living Golem

Sometimes wizards have peculiar ideas. (Actually, some would argue that their ideas are strange more often than not.) The wizard who created this creature ruined a perfectly good shadesteel golem by giving it life. The experiment did not go as the wizard intended, but he still managed to enslave his newly alive golem and bend it to his will. The wizard trained the living golem to be his personal killer so that he could get revenge on rival wizards.

The creature looks human, though it stands 11 feet tall and is very thin and angular. Its skin is a dull gray color, it has long slender fingers, and its head looks like a skull. The creature wears dark gray clothing most of the time. Because of its very high base attack bonus, it uses Power Attack for 10 points every round it is in melee. It prefers to attack by surprise (usually from hiding) and then make full attacks until its foe dies.

Advanced Incarnate Construct Shadesteel Golem CR 14

Advanced incarnate construct shadesteel golem ranger 7

N Large Giant

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11; low-light vision

Languages Common

AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 26

hp 270 (HD 37)

Fort +22, **Ref** +16, **Will** +15

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), fly 30 ft. (perfect); woodland stride

Melee +1 *keen longsword* +37 (2d6+11/17-20) or

Ranged composite longbow +29 (2d6+6) or

Melee +1 *keen longsword* +35/+30/+25/+20 (2d6+12/17-20) and
+1 *human bane short sword* +35/+30 melee (1d8+6) or

Ranged composite longbow +29/+24/+19/+14 (2d6+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +26; **Grp** +37

Atk Options favored enemy (humans) +4, favored enemy (monstrous humanoids) +2, Combat Reflexes, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (50 charges)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL 3rd):



1st -- *longstrider, resist energy*

Abilities Str 32, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 7

SQ animal companion, wild empathy +5, woodland stride

Feats Combat Reflexes, EnduranceB, Improved Two-Weapon FightingB, Power Attack, TrackB, Two-Weapon FightingB

Skills Hide +20, Jump +14, Knowledge (geography) +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +19, Search +6, Spot +11, Survival +14

Possessions +2 *chain shirt*, +2 *ring of protection*, +1 *keen longsword*, +1 *human baneshortsword*, +1 *composite longbow* (+5 Str bonus), *quiver of Ehlonna*, 20 arrows, 10 silver arrows, 20 cold iron arrows, 10 adamantite arrows, clothing

Hook "I am now alive. Soon you will not be."

Animal Companion (Ex): The incarnate shadesteel golem could have an animal companion if he desired, but he has none at present.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the **RPGA** Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the *Living Greyhawk* and *Living Force* campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing. He also models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno, and spends as much time as possible with his wife and many pets.

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